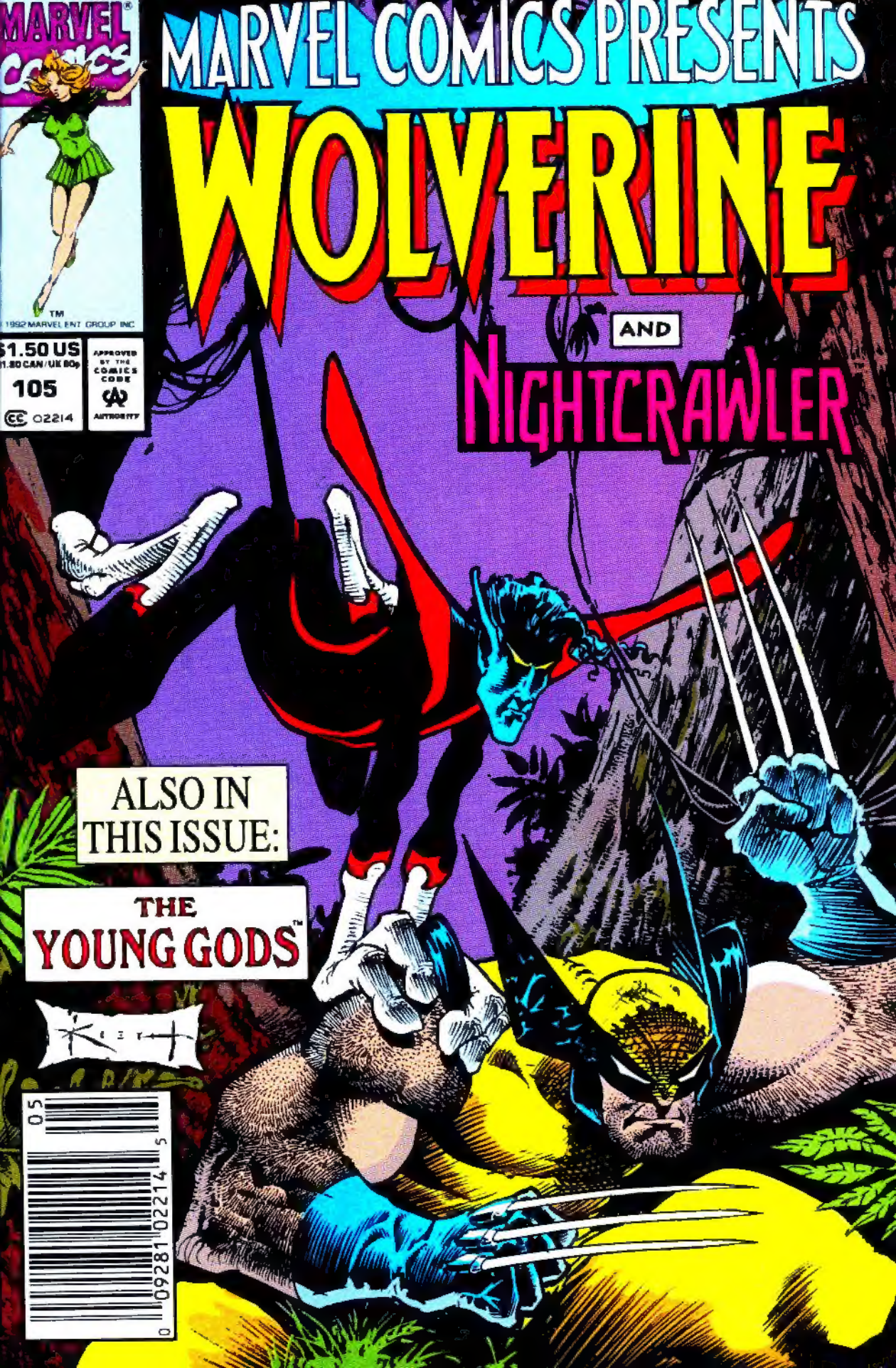
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APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS
WOLVERINE
AND
NIGHTCRAWLER
ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:
THE YOUNG GODS™
Kieth
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MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS WOLVERINE

Sam Kieth — COVER
Terry Kavanagh — EDITOR
Mark Powers — ASSISTANT EDITOR
Tom DeFalco — EDITOR IN CHIEF

pg.

WOLVERINE/ NIGHTCRAWLER 1

MALE BONDING
Part 5 of 8
"THROUGH THICK AND THIN"

Last issue, Wolverine and Nightcrawler discovered a community of peace-loving monsters–and vowed to protect them from their evil brethren!

Writer — SCOTT LOBDELL
Penciler — GENE COLAN
Inker – AL WILLIAMSON
Letterer — MICHAEL HIGGINS
Colorist —KELLY CORVESE

pg.

YOUNG GODS 9

AGAINST A ROGUE GOD
Part 5 of 9
"ARTIFACT OF EVIL"

Last issue, the Young Gods came to Central Bend, Wisconsin, searching for the source of a great evil–what they found was a shopping mall full of people under an evil influence out to kill them!

Writers — CONWAY/FEIN
Penciler — TOM SUTTON
Inker — JONATHAN HOLDREDGE
Letterer — PHIL FELIX
Colorist — TOM SMITH

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS Vol. 1, No. 105, 1992. [illegible] MARVEL COMICS, Terry Stewart, Publisher. Marvel Publishing, Inc., Peter Paradise, Publishing OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. [illegible] Group Inc. [illegible] Subscription rate [illegible] $38.50 by postage and GST paid. [illegible] characters, unless otherwise noted, and any similarities to persons, living or dead, are purely coincidental. [illegible] WOLVERINE and GHOST RIDER and all prominent characteristics thereof are trademarks of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS, c/o MARVEL COMICS SUBSCRIPTION DEPARTMENT, 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. Printed in U.S.A.

c/o Marvel Comics Group
387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016

Attention Correspondents: All letters to be considered for publication must include your name and address though we will withhold that info by request!

Dear Terry,

So, we're one issue away from the Wolvie-Ghosty extravaganza. MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #99 was a pretty good issue, so let's get to the comments:

1) Wolverine: This prologue to next issue's story was very well done, if not spectacular or great. Rob Liefeld and Howard Mackie's story was pretty good. Jim Valentino is normally an excellent penciler, but I didn't think his style fit well with the inking of Bud LaRosa. Sorry, but "Hauntings" only gets a B+.

2) Puck: "Razer's Edge" was one of the better stories this issue. It's nice to see the Alphans featured in MCP often—and this story with Puck was above par. Paula Foye and Raz Mesinai's story was excellent (let's see more from them), but Madureira and Rubinstein's art wasn't all that great. Overall grade: B+.

3) Ghost Rider: Sorry, but the opening chapter of "D'Spryte Times, D'Spryte Measures" was a lot better than the closing one. Jimmy Palmiotti's artwork was nice, but this time around, I wasn't too thrilled with Dan Slott's script. Still, the overall story wasn't all that bad, so the second chapter gets a B.

4) Amazing Spider-Man: Nice to see our friendly neighborhood Spider-Man swinging into MCP, don't you think? "Has Anybody Seen My Gal," obviously a story set right after Spidey and M.J. tied the knot, was probably the highlight of this issue. Susan Kennedy wrote a very funny script, and Davis, Hudson and Pepoy's art was above average. I give this story a B+, as with two other stories in this issue.

5) Wolverine cover: Loved it. Beautiful. But what comic did the Byrne cover appear on? Grade: A smashing A+.

6) Ghost Rider cover: Not Sam's best, so I'll give it (one guess...) a B+.

Sorry I only gave one item an A (and it was a cover), but if Howard and Sam's story next issue is as good as it sounds, that'll get an A+. And I can assure you that the covers will, because I've seen them already.

Joey Marchese
116 Emerald Place
Clark, NJ 07066

Joey, that Byrne cover was originally seen in UNCANNY X-MEN #132. Glad you like our one-shots, especially "Razer's Edge." We think you'll be seeing more from Paula in the future—especially since she's now under the tutelage of the esteemed Mr. Lobdell. We expect great things from her. And as for the maligned Joe Madureira...

Dear Terry,

This title gets better and better. The Wolverine cover with inks by Terry Austin was beautiful. But how does Wolverine manage to keep in costume when it's being ripped all the time? 3 Claws. The Ghost Rider cover gets 1 1/2 Claws (those boots...).

Amazingly enough, the highlights of this issue weren't the main stories, but rather the one-shots hidden inside:

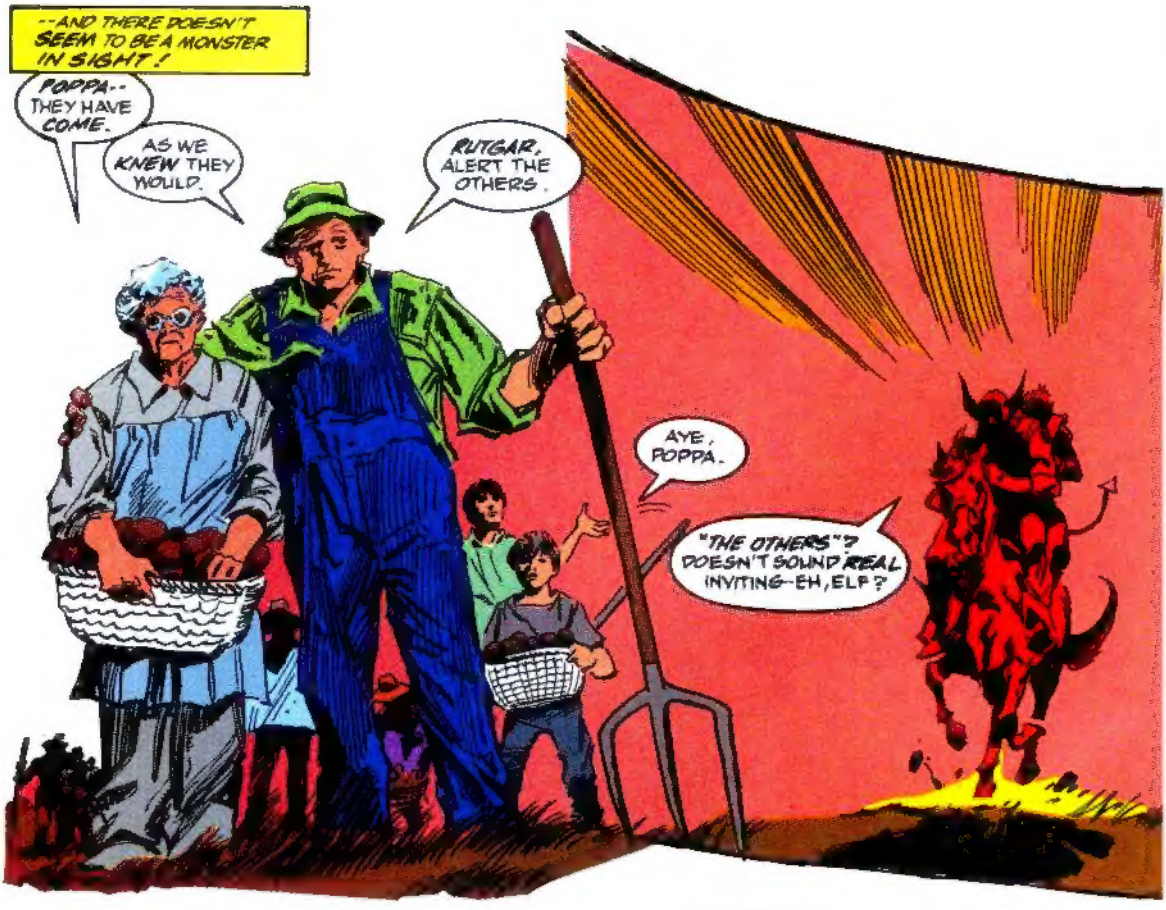
The Mary Jane/Peter Parker story was the one I've been waiting a long time for, even if it does take place pre-McFarlane. It's good to see a story based almost exclusively on their relationship. Please let us see more!!! 3 Claws (or 3 Webs!?!).

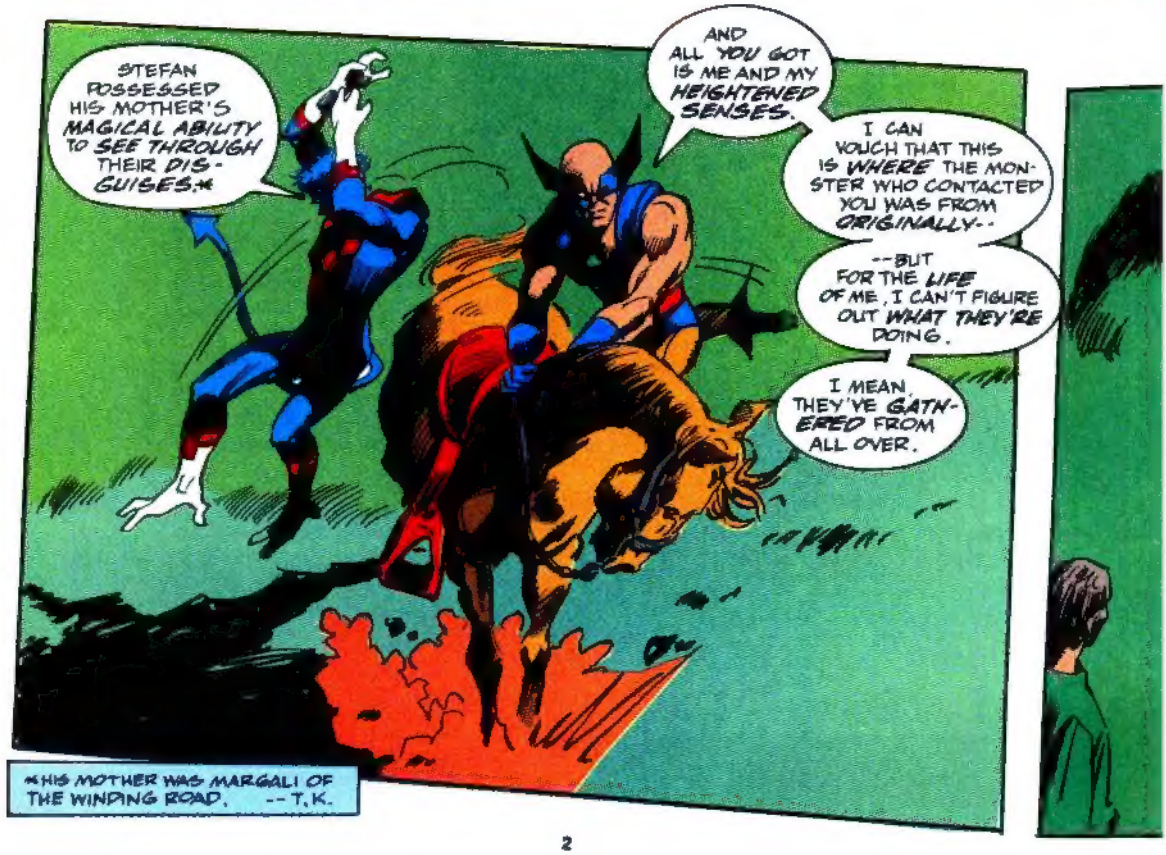
How long will it be until someone out there gives Joe Madureira (how do you pronounce that?) his own book? The art is dynamic!!! What's next for him? Sasquatch? He does seem to like drawing bars... An enthusiastic 3 Claws!

Augie De Blieck, Jr.
58 Edison Place
North Haledon, NJ 07508

Yeah, we were wondering about that bar thing ourselves, Augie—especially since Joe isn't even drinking age yet! By the way, his name is pronounced Mad-oo-ree-air-uh. And, we promise to give him some regular work... as soon as he finishes school.

NAME'S WOLVERINE.
ADAMANTIUM SKELETON WITH CLAWS. MUTANT HEALIN' FACTOR.
NOT THE FRIENDLIEST GUY I KNOW.
MY "CO-PILOT" IS KURT WAGNER-- GOES BY THE NAME OF NIGHTCRAWLER.
HE'S GOT THE BODY OF A DEMON... THE HEART OF A NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER.
WOLVERINE
AND
NIGHTCRAWLER
WHEN WE WERE BOTH X-MEN, ME AND THE ELF MOSTLY GOT INVOLVED WITH OTHER MUTANTS.
TODAY, THOUGH, WE'RE ABOUT TO MIX IT UP WITH A HORDE OF MONSTERS POSIN' AS HUMANS.
TROUBLE BEING, WE TRAVELED THROUGH THE NIGHT--
THROUGH THICK AND THIN... MALE BONDING-PART 5


--AND THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE A MONSTER IN SIGHT!
POPPA--THEY HAVE COME.
AS WE KNEW THEY WOULD.
RUTGAR, ALERT THE OTHERS.
AYE, POPPA.
"THE OTHERS"? DOESN'T SOUND REAL INVITING--EH, ELF?


STEFAN POSSESSED HIS MOTHER'S MAGICAL ABILITY TO SEE THROUGH THEIR DISGUISES.*
AND ALL YOU GOT IS ME AND MY HEIGHTENED SENSES.
I CAN VOUCH THAT THIS IS WHERE THE MONSTER WHO CONTACTED YOU WAS FROM ORIGINALLY--
--BUT FOR THE LIFE OF ME, I CAN'T FIGURE OUT WHAT THEY'RE DOING.
I MEAN, THEY'VE GATHERED FROM ALL OVER.

*HIS MOTHER WAS MARGALI OF THE WINDING ROAD. --T.K.

NEIN, FRUEND LOGAN.
IT IS AS WE SUSPECTED-- THESE "KINDLY FARM PEOPLE"...
...ARE NO DOUBT THE COMMUNITY OF MONSTERS MY STEP-BROTHER STEFAN SACRIFICED HIS LIFE-- HIS VERY SANITY-- TO RID THE WORLD OF.
WE HAVE MADE IT OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO FINISH THE JOB THAT HE BEGAN.
GRANDMAMA, WHY ARE THEY ANGRY?
WHAT HAVE WE--
HUSH, CHILD.
AND THEY HAVE SURROUNDED US.
BUT THE WAY THEY'RE CARRYIN' THEMSELVES...
...IF I DIDN'T KNOW ANY BETTER, I'D SWEAR THEY WERE--

--SURRENDERING?!
THERE MUST BE THIRTY MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN...
...SHEDDING THEIR HUMAN SHELLS TO REVEAL THEMSELVES AS THE MONSTERS WE BEEN SEARCHIN' FOR.
AH YES, "MONSTER"- THE TERM YOU HUMANS HAVE LONG USED TO DESCRIBE ANY UNLIKE YOURSELVES.

FOR NEARLY A THOUSAND YEARS, WE OF THE CLAN HAVE DWELT AMONG YOU--
--CLOAKED IN GUISES WHICH YOUR LIMITED, XENOPHOBIC MINDS COULD COPE WITH.
FOR GENERATIONS WE HAVE HIDDEN. WE WILL HIDE NO LONGER.
WE HAD DECIDED BEFORE YOUR IMMINENT ARRIVAL--
--WE DO NOT WISH TO CONTINUE LIVING IN A WORLD THAT FEARS AND HATES US.
OUCH.

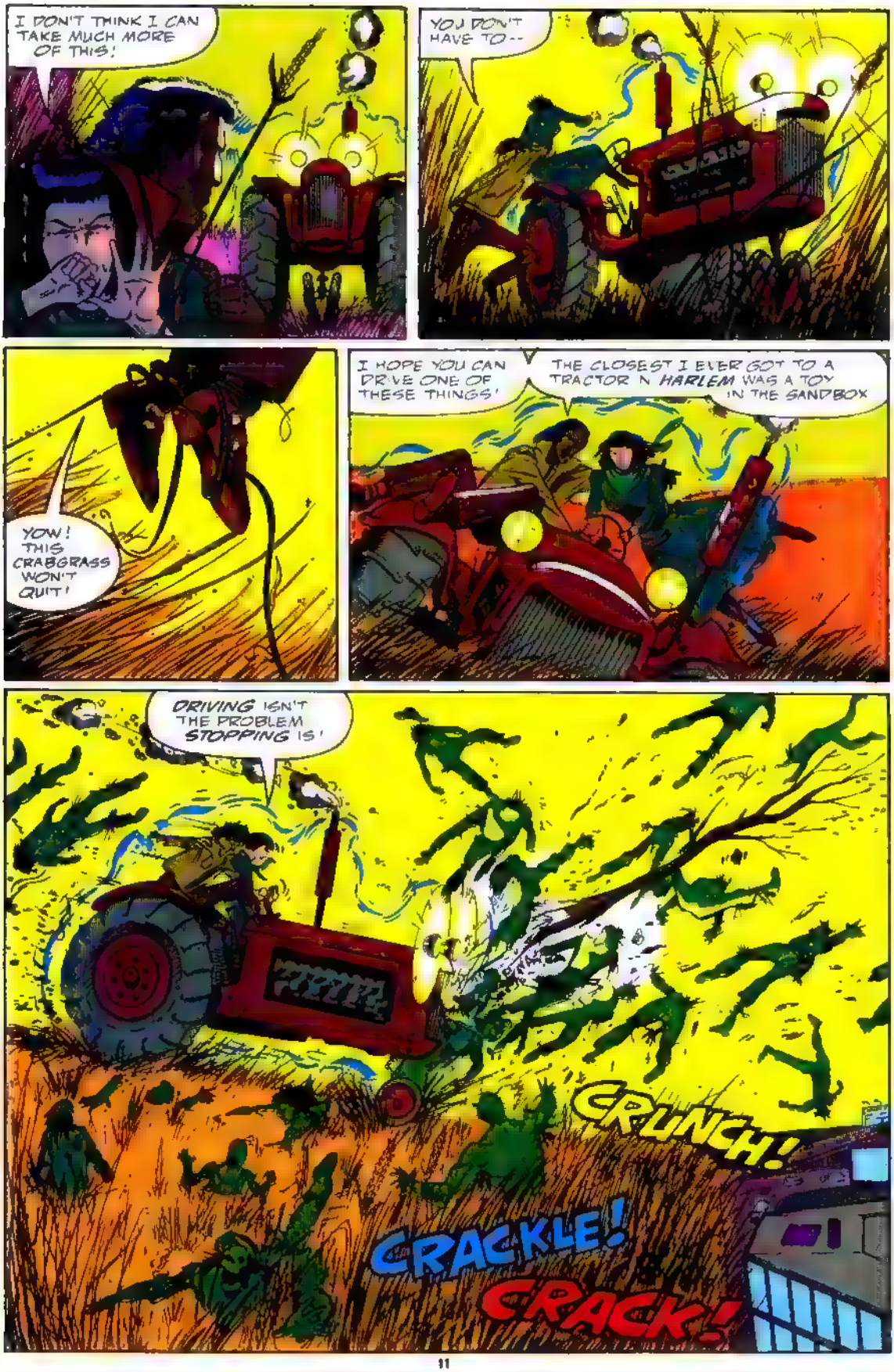
SOUND FAMILIAR, ELF?
TRUE, THEIR PLIGHT WOULD SEEM TO MIRROR OUR OWN--
--BUT THERE IS MUCH ABOUT THIS THAT DOES NOT MAKE SENSE.
IF THESE... PEOPLE HAVE CHOSEN A PATH OF NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE--
--IT DOES NOT EXPLAIN HOW THEY COULD SO COLDLY, SO CALLOUSLY...
...DESTROY THE LIFE OF ONE OF THEIR OWN?! THE CHILD MONSTER WHO CAME TO ENLIST OUR AID AGAINST--
HELMUT?! MY SON...
...DESPITE MY WARNINGS, HE LEFT THE FARM--
--BELIEVING IN HIS HEART OF HEARTS THAT YOU WOULD SEE FIT TO SAVE US AS YOU SAVED HIM IN YOUR YOUTH!
ARE YOU TELLING ME... MY ELDEST SON IS DEAD?
BUT...
...IF YOU DID NOT KILL HIM--

FLASH
THEN WHO DID?
THAT WOULD BE ME, BLUE!
THE FIREBALL APPEARS OUTTA NOWHERE.
WE SAW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MONSTER KID -- WHOEVER TOSSED IT COULD KILL US WHERE WE STAND.
BUT HER INTENT SEEMS TO BE JUST TO SCARE US, TO KNOCK US OFF OUR FEET.
I SAY "HER," 'CAUSE I RECOGNIZE THE VOICE...

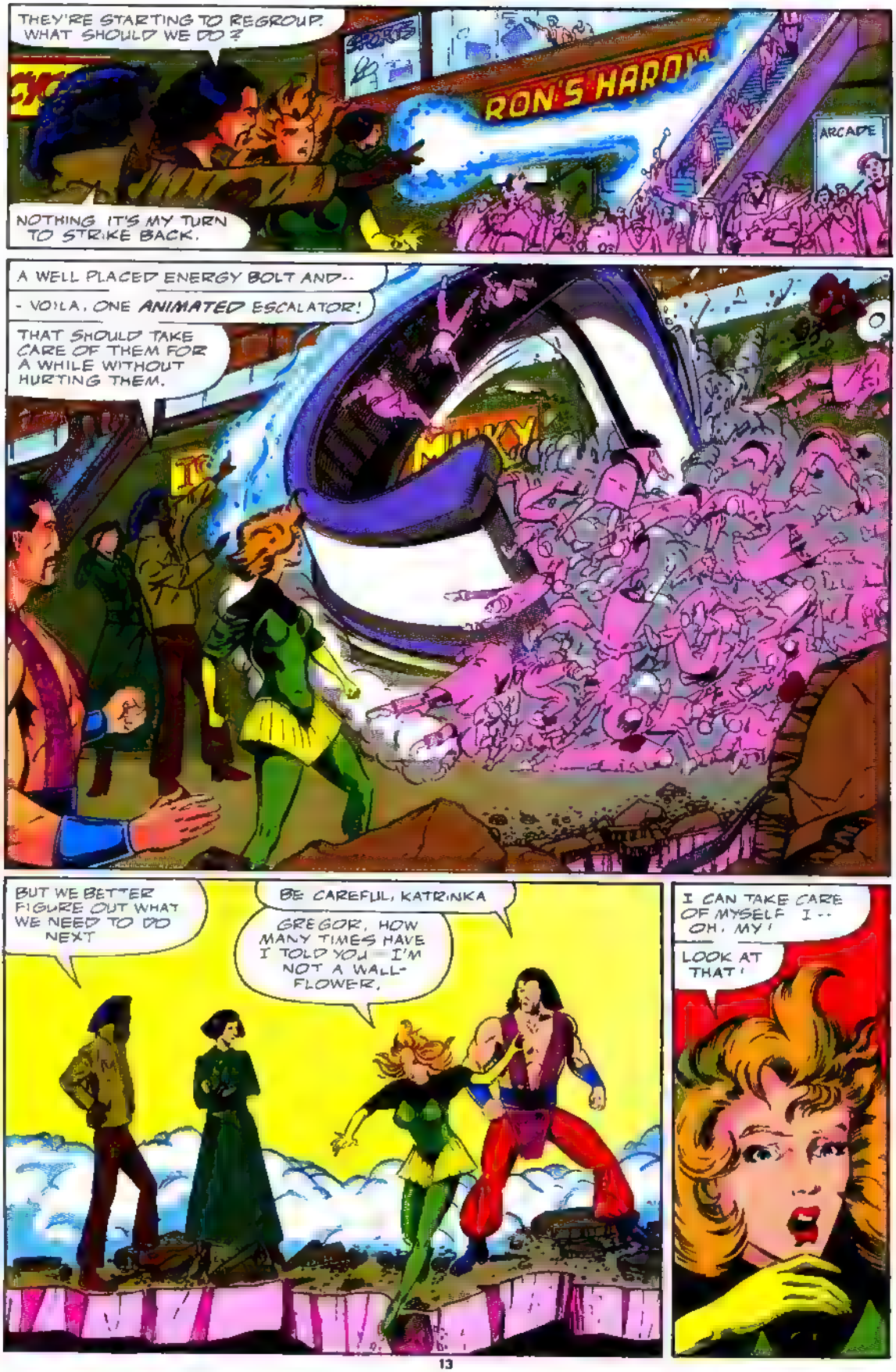
...IT BELONGS TO KURT'S CHILDHOOD LADY FRIEND--
JUTTA?!
AND SHE BROUGHT THE REST OF HER CIRCUS BUDDIES WITH HER.
SOMETHIN' TELLS ME THEY AIN'T HERE TO PERFORM A BENEFIT SHOW ON BEHALF OF THE MONSTERS!
ON THE CONTRARY, HERR LOGAN--
--DER JARRMACHT HAS INDEED COME IN REGARDS TO A PERFORMANCE FOR THESE CREATURES!
WE HAVE EVERY INTENTION...
...OF DANCING ON THEIR GRAVES!
CONTINUES NEXT ISSUE...

ARTIFACT OF EVIL
PART 5
AGAINST A ROGUE GOD
FEATURING
THE YOUNG GODS
THEY CAME TO CENTRAL BEND, WISCONSIN IN SEARCH OF A GREAT EVIL.
THEY FOUND IT IN THE WHEAT FIELDS AROUND THE TRI-COUNTY SHOPPING MALL
:GASP: HARVEST! :CHOKE: DO SOMETHING -- CAN'T HOLD ON FOR MUCH LONGER! :GASP:
SO MUCH PAIN... NAUSEA... GOT TO FIGHT IT.
FOR GENII!
SHE IS HARVEST, AND LIKE THE REST OF US, SHE IS A YOUNG GOD.
HER POWERS ARE BASED IN THE EARTH'S AGRICULTURE
THE SICKNESS THAT PERMEATES THE WHEAT AFFECTS HER AS WELL.

HAVE TO TELEPATHICALLY TAKE CONTROL OF THE WHEAT. WEAKEN IT --
-- SO THAT GENII CAN BREAK FREE!
WHEW... {GASP} ...THAT WAS TOO CLOSE.
COME ON, HARVEST, TIME TO LEAVE.
THAT TRACTOR DID ITS JOB KEEPING THOSE SCARECROWS ON THE RUN.
...NOW, IT CAN BE OUR "TICKET TO RIDE" ALL I HAVE TO DO IS MANIPULATE MY LIFE ENERGY AND --
-- HERE IT COMES
VROOM
VROOM


I DON'T THINK I CAN TAKE MUCH MORE OF THIS!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO--
YOW! THIS CRABGRASS WON'T QUIT!
I HOPE YOU CAN DRIVE ONE OF THESE THINGS!
THE CLOSEST I EVER GOT TO A TRACTOR N HARLEM WAS A TOY IN THE SANDBOX
DRIVING ISN'T THE PROBLEM STOPPING IS!
CRUNCH!
CRACKLE!
CRACK!

WE'RE HEADED FOR THE MALL!
WHOA!
HANG ON!
LIKE I'M GOING TO LET GO?!
CRASH
WILL THIS MADNESS NEVER END?
HARVEST AND GEN!! ARE ON THAT THING!
IT SEEMS THAT WHATEVER WAS CONTROLLING THE WHEAT FIELDS IS ALSO CONTROLLING THE PEOPLE!
50° TECH


THEY'RE STARTING TO REGROUP. WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
NOTHING. IT'S MY TURN TO STRIKE BACK.
SPORTS
RON'S HARD
ARCADE
A WELL PLACED ENERGY BOLT AND--
- VOILA, ONE ANIMATED ESCALATOR!
THAT SHOULD TAKE CARE OF THEM FOR A WHILE WITHOUT HURTING THEM.
MILKY
BUT WE BETTER FIGURE OUT WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT
BE CAREFUL, KATRINKA
GREGOR, HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU - I'M NOT A WALL-FLOWER.
I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF I-- OH, MY!
LOOK AT THAT!

IT WAS BURIED UNDER THE FLOOR!
THAT GLOW IS OMINOUS
I SENSE GREAT POWER COMING FROM IT. I MUST GET A CLOSER LOOK!
HELP ME, GREGOR
CAREFUL, THIS COULD BE A TRAP
AND WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T TOUCH IT!
IT'S SET OFF MY DREAM EFFECT -- CONJURING UP SOME KIND OF HIDEOUS VISION!
THIS IS TOO MUCH FOR ME! MY HEAD FEELS LIKE IT'S GOING TO BURST!

NO!
WHAT DID WE JUST SEE?
A PORTENT OF THE HORROR YET TO COME.
I'M AFRAID GREGOR MAY BE RIGHT. IT IS THE SOURCE OF EVIL THAT VARUA AND I SENSED--
--ONLY, I CAN'T PINPOINT ITS LOCATION AND I DON'T WANT TO TOUCH IT AGAIN OKAY?
I THINK IT'S TIME THAT WE CHECKED IN WITH THE OTHERS IN IRELAND AND SRI LANKA.
I AGREE
OKAY, CONCENTRATE...LET YOURSELF BECOME ENTRANCED. NOW, MAKE CONTACT... SEA WITCH IN IRELAND AND VARUA IN SRI LANKA
SOMETHING'S WRONG. I CAN'T ACCESS VARUA
I FEEL RELIEVED WHEN DAYDREAMER'S TELEPATHIC VOICE REACHES OUT TO ME. BUT THE RELIEF DOESN'T LAST FOR LONG.
WE HAVE A PROBLEM. I TRIED TO CONTACT VARUA'S GROUP AS WELL, BUT I WAS BLOCKED FROM DOING SO.
I THINK IT'S TIME THAT WE ALL GOT TOGETHER LET'S RENDEZVOUS IN SRI LANKA AND FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO VARUA'S TEAM.
YES.. I'M WORRIED ABOUT BRIGHT SWORD
UH HUH
THE OTHERS, TOO
TAKE CARE, MY FRIENDS... SAFE JOURNEY.
I HOPE WE'RE IN TIME.

BREAKING CONTACT WITH DAYDREAMER LEFT ME UNNERVED. WE HAD BEEN THROUGH QUITE AN ORDEAL OURSELVES.
AND FROM THE LOOKS OF THEM, THEY TOO HAD BEEN THROUGH THE WRINGER.
I COULD ONLY SHUDDER AT THE THOUGHT OF WHAT VARUA AND THE OTHERS MUST BE GOING THROUGH.
WELL, LET'S GET GOING RAOUL. IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND.. ?
MY PLEASURE, BRIGIT.
I'LL JUST "SING" US OUT OF HERE WITH MY POWER OF SONIC TELEKINESIS.
LOOKING BACK, I KNOW I SHOULD HAVE BEEN PAYING MORE ATTENTION TO OUR SURROUNDINGS
I SHOULD HAVE SPOTTED THOSE SHAMBLING MOCKERIES OF MEN. IF I DID, IT MIGHT HAVE SAVED US A LOT OF TROUBLE.
WE LET THEM GET AWAY. THEY ARE GOING TO FOUL THE MASTER'S PLANS.
NO...THEY UNWITTINGLY DO NAUDIA'S WORK FOR US.
SOON, NAUDIA OF THE SILVER HAND WILL RETURN TO HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE OF POWER. AND NO ONE WILL BE ABLE TO STOP HIM.
ESPECIALLY, NOT A BUNCH OF INEXPERIENCED GODLINGS.
COME, TIME GROWS SHORT AND WE HAVE MUCH TO DO!
CONTINUES NEXT ISSUE.

MARVEL COMICS
MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS
GHOST RIDER
AND
DR. STRANGE
ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:
THE THING
1.50 US
105
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MARVEL READERS PRESENT

Dear Terry,

Status Report #99:

Wolverine: It's nice to see even a Weapon-X can take time out to sleep. Boy, Nightmare is getting a lot of exposure lately. It amazes me that Logan can control his every thought, even under the stress of Nightmare's terrorism. I can't wait to see next issue just to see Howard Mackie write Dr. Doom and Ghost Rider into all of this. It sounds like a 100th birthday with 101 candles. The candles are out and my wish has come true. 3 Claws!

Puck: This tale was worth the wait. I've been craving a solo story forever. I feel, with the right creative team, Puck could handle at least a Limited Series. This is a "nightmare" itself—Puck needs to find a way to eliminate Razer completely. Actually, maybe I missed something, but didn't Puck get rid of Razer in Loki's dimension over in ALPHA FLIGHT? Wasn't Puck reverted back to a dwarflike state because of the Master's experimentations? Hmm...maybe I need to reread my ALPHAs. Besides this possible inaccuracy, Paula and Raz show lots of promise. Joe Madureira still hasn't disappointed me, either. Arcade's cool, but I don't understand the motives he had for bothering Puck. Since he's a mercenary, maybe someone hired him. Otherwise, I don't think Puck's ever bothered Arcade. Why bug the Puckster? Oh well, I'm not going to count off for my own little nitpicking—it was still a great little yarn. 3 Claws!

Ghost Rider: This story wasn't half bad. I don't like the ending quite as well as the beginning. He dispatched the D'Sprytes far too easily for my tastes, but surrounding that is the fact that this has been a decent G.R. solo adventure. Dan Slott's writing is pretty good. I hope he keeps these tales pumping out in a steady stream. Jimmy Palmiotti's art should grace the regular GHOST RIDER book. Good luck to both fellas. 3 Claws, for both parts as a whole.

Spider-Man: Short, sweet and Susan! Susan Kennedy is new to me, but I hope to see more of her work. I think this should have been a Peter Parker solo rather than a Spidey story. It's nice to see Pete confront life out of costume. I have no real arguments over this story. It was probably the weaker of the four, but not weak enough to avoid... 2 3/4 Claws!

Covers: Wolverine's fist is as large as his head, but better than...

Ghost Rider: Sam, Sam, Sam, your art's great, but your anatomy is really weird!

Len Biehl
Rantoul, IL

Oh, er, Len, we guess we forgot to mention that the Puck story took place prior to the removal of Razer from Puck's body. Sorry for the confusion...

Dear Terry and Mark,

You've come a long way, baby. What's amazing is to compare MCP #99 with the very first issue, almost four years ago (!). While Wolverine is still in the lead-off spot, the rest of the title is different. Originally, many series ran concurrently. In #99, there seemed to be an intent to keep the issue relatively self-contained so the first-time reader could pick it up and follow it. This is a necessary evolution. The other notable change is the flip-book look. I think it's a great improvement (Notice all the imitators now?).

What the premiere issue did have were stories for all ages. The Man-Thing serial was intended for an older audience, while all could appreciate the Wolverine tale. I hope in MCP's second hundred issues we'll see more daring concepts. Let's see more character introductions like Coldblood. Let's see previews of new titles and non-super hero genre stories. For MCP to survive and thrive, I think it has to experiment a little. Thanks for a fun 99 issues. Best of luck with #100 and beyond.

Mark Lucas
1100 Granville Ave. #2
Los Angeles, CA 90049

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS GHOST RIDER

Sam Kieth — COVER
Terry Kavanagh — EDITOR
Mark Powers — ASSISTANT EDITOR
Tom DeFalco — EDITOR IN CHIEF

pg.

GHOST RIDER/ DR. STRANGE..... 1

DOORWAY TO DARKNESS
Part 5 of 6
"GORN REVEALED"

Previously, Ghost Rider and Dr. Strange pursued young Kevin and his kidnapers into the realm of Gormac. Now, they must confront the evil one to preserve the boy's freedom!

Writer — HOWARD MACKIE
Penciler — RICK LEONARDI
Inker — JIMMY PALMIOTTI
Letterer —JANICE CHIANG
Colorist — FREDDY MENDEZ

pg.

THE THING 9

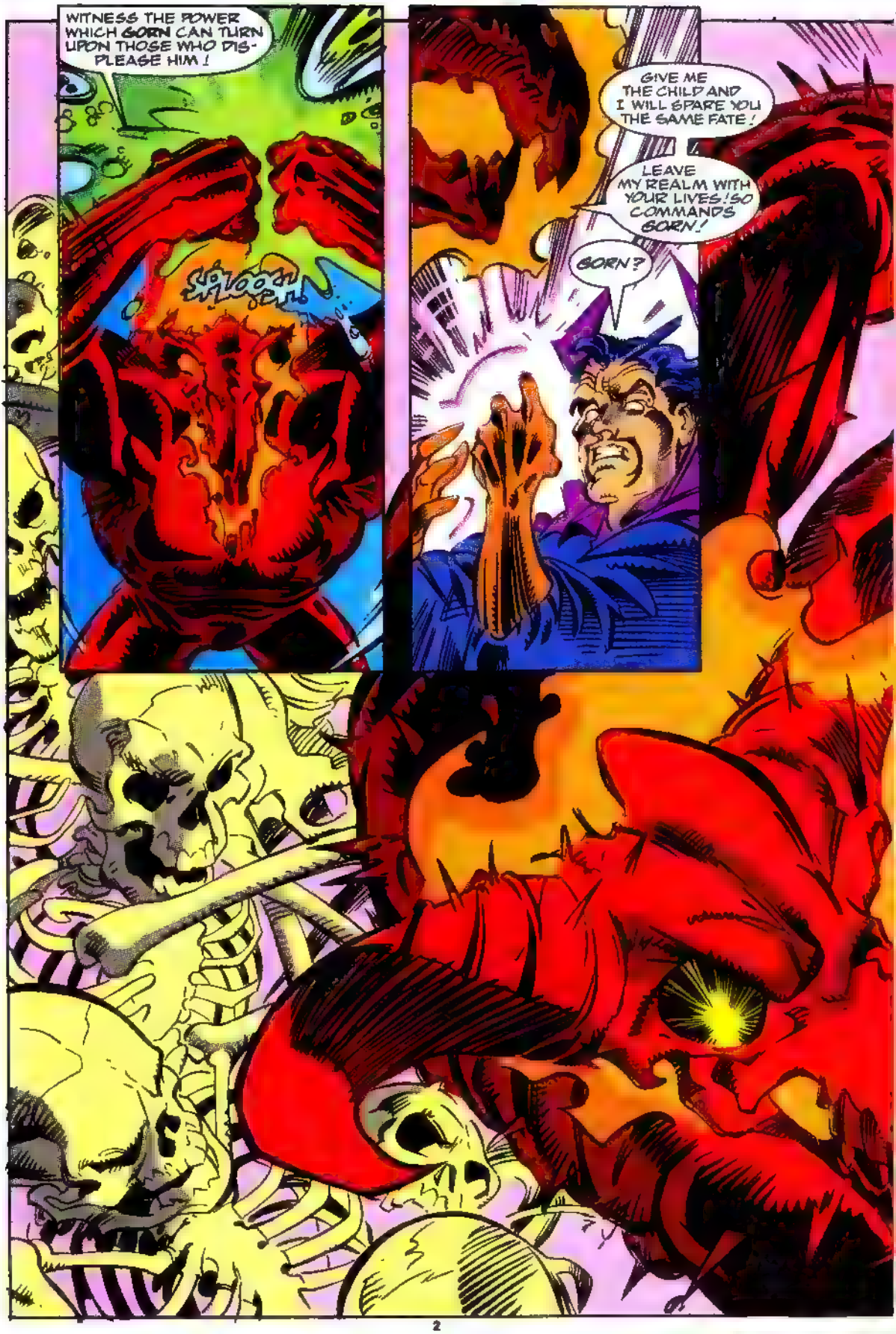
"CRYSTAL QUEST"

Transformed by cosmic rays into something more than human, Ben Grimm uses his power to help the human race chart the unknown as the Thing!

Writer —SKIP DIETZ
Penciler — JOEL ZULUETA
Inker — TIM TUCHY
Letterer — MICHAEL HIGGINS
Colorist — ARIANE

NEXT ISSUE: WOLVERINE AND NIGHTCRAWLER VS. JUTTA AND HER CIRCUS OF MONSTERS! GHOST RIDER'S AND DR. STRANGE'S SHOWDOWN WITH GORMAC! THE YOUNG GODS INVESTIGATE A MYSTICAL STONE. ALL THIS, AND THE RETURN OF GABRIEL, THE DEMON-HUNTER!

DOORWAY TO DARKNESS
PART 5 OF 6
GHOST RIDER
DR. STRANGE
I SEE MY TWO LACKEYS HAVE FAILED IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO STOP YOU!
BUT THAT DOESN'T MATTER FOR NOW YOU...
ENTER THE REALM OF GORN!


WITNESS THE POWER WHICH GORN CAN TURN UPON THOSE WHO DISPLEASE HIM!
SLOOSH
GIVE ME THE CHILD AND I WILL SPARE YOU THE SAME FATE!
LEAVE MY REALM WITH YOUR LIVES! SO COMMANDS GORN!
GORN?

I BARELY RECOGNIZE YOUR NAME FROM THE LIST OF MINOR DEMONS.
WE BOTH KNOW WHO IS THE MASTER OF THIS REALM.
AND DO NOT PRESUME TO THREATEN THE EARTH'S SORCERER SUPREME WITH PATHETIC DISPLAYS OF STRENGTH.

WE ARE IN A TIME OF GREAT CHANGE STRANGE.
BOTH HERE AND THROUGHOUT ALL THE DIMENSIONS OF MAGIC!
HERE MY MASTER'S TIME IS ALMOST AT AN END.
THE TIME IS RIGHT FOR ME TO TAKE MY LEAVE OF THIS ACCURSED DIMENSION
TIME FOR ME TO ENTER YOUR WORLD, STRANGE...
...AND I CAN ONLY DO SO WITH THE BOY HE WILL BE MINE
NO, DEMON!
THE BOY WILL SUFFER NO MORE AT YOUR HANDS!

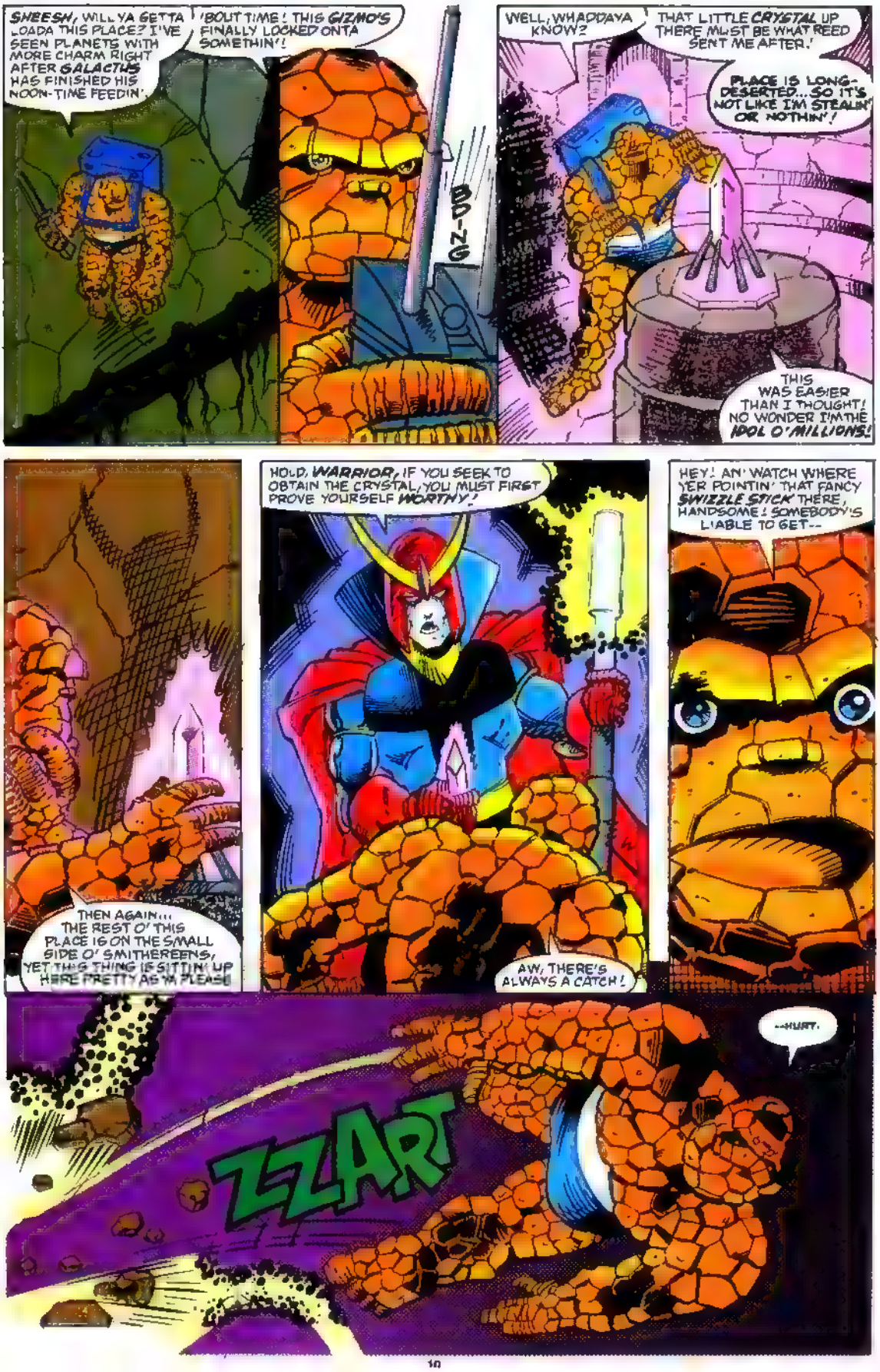
KEVIN'S SUFFERING IS COMING TO AN END BUT YOURS SOON
IT IS JUST BEGINNING!
ENOUGH GHOST RIDER.
NOW IT IS TIME FOR GORN TO PROVIDE US WITH SOME ANSWERS!
NEVER, SORCEROR!

YOU WILL TELL ALL GORN.
...YOU HAVE NO ABILITY TO BLOCK THE POWERS OF THE ALL-SEEING EYE OF AGAMOTTO!
NOW YOUR MIND WILL BE OPENED TO ME.
YES STRANGE, LOOK UPON THOSE WHO WORSHIP ME AS A GOD ON YOUR DIMENSION!
THROUGH THEM AND THEIR SACRIFICES I HAVE GAINED POWER.
POWER ENOUGH TO SHIELD MY ACTIVITIES FROM MEPHISTO.
THEN I LEARNED THAT THERE WAS A WAY OUT OF THIS PLACE. A WAY TO TAKE MYSELF AWAY FROM MEPHISTO'S COMMAND.
THE TIME WAS RIGHT... WITH THE PROPER KEY!
THE BOY WAS THAT KEY.
THERE IS MAGIC ABOUT THE BOY.
I SENSED IT
HIS MOTHER, ONE OF MY WORSHIPERS, SENSED IT
SHE WAS WILLING TO GIVE HIM TO ME
BUT THE FATHER STOOD IN OUR WAY.
I HAD THE MOTHER DO WHAT SHE HAD TO DO. BUT THE BOY ESCAPED.

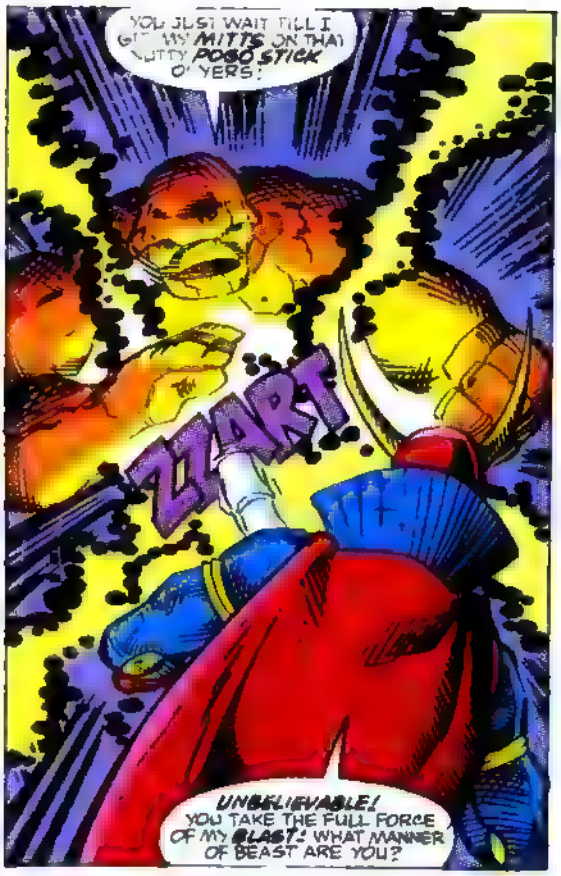
I HAVE SOUGHT HIM EVER SINCE
IT WILL ALL BE OVER SOON, KEVIN.
NOW, GORN, WE WILL TAKE OUR LEAVE.
I SENSE THAT YOUR MASTER IS APPROACHING!
PERHAPS YOU CAN EXPLAIN TO HIM THAT HIS TIME IS COMING TO AN END!
NO! DON'T LEAVE ME HERE TO...
GORN!
M-M-MASTER.

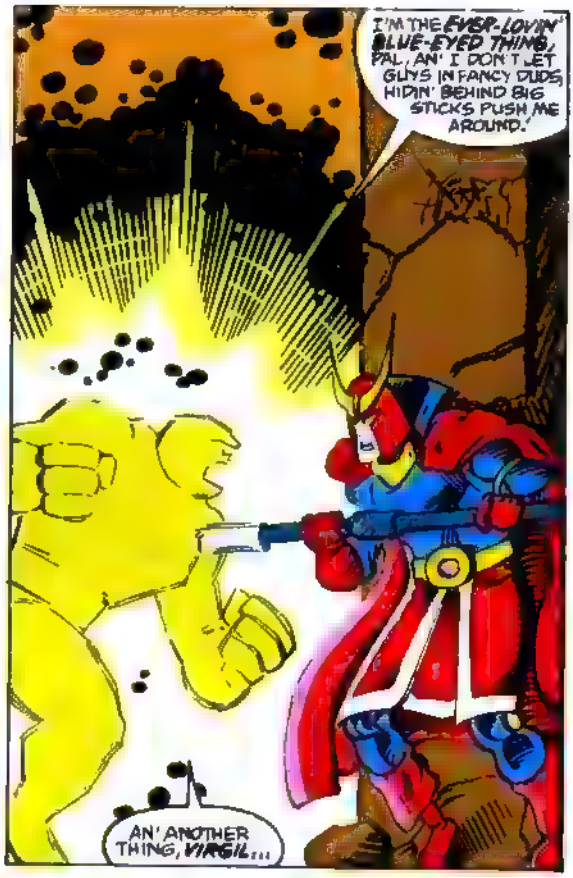
WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO, WORM?
N-NOTHING, MASTER!
YOU SEEK TO LIE TO THE PRINCE OF LIARS?
HAHAHAHAHA!
KEVIN, IF YOU ARE READY, I WOULD ASK THAT YOU TAKE US TO YOUR MOTHER!
ONLY THEN CAN YOU TRULY PUT THIS INCIDENT BEHIND YOU!
:SNIFF: YES, I'LL DO IT!
CONCLUDES NEXT ISSUE...

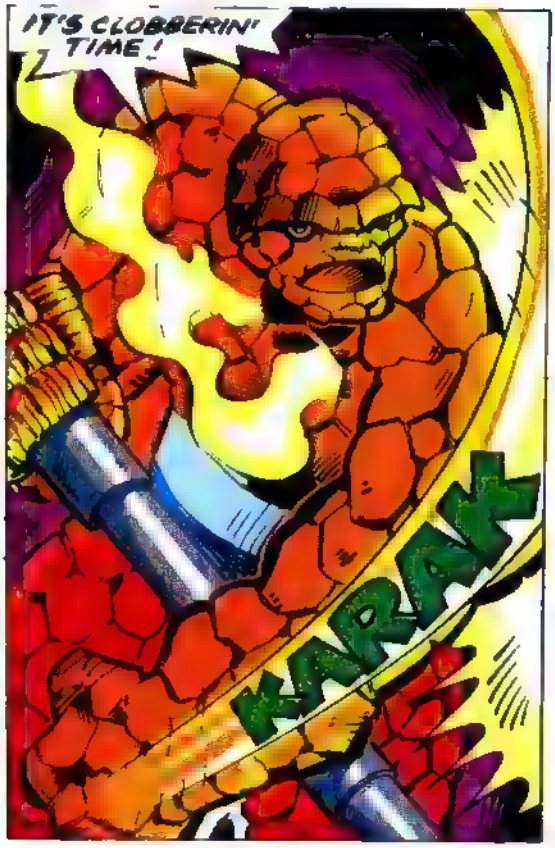
FAR BEYOND THE SMALL PLANET WE CALL HOME ARE COUNTLESS OTHER WORLDS. COUNTLESS OTHER UNIVERSES. ONE OF THESE UNIVERSES IS THE FEARSOME NEGATIVE ZONE, HOME TO SUCH DANGEROUS DENIZENS AS ANNIHILUS, BLASTAAR, AND THE SUPER-ADAPTOID. AND WHILE FEW ON EARTH KNOW OF THIS BIZARRE AND ALIEN DIMENSION, FEWER STILL ARE BRAVE ENOUGH TO VENTURE THERE. ONE OF THESE INTREPID FEW IS THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S BEN GRIMM, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE THING!
TODAY HE HAS BRAVED THE MANY DANGERS OF A JOURNEY INTO THIS ANTI-MATTER UNIVERSE TO EMBARK UPON A
THE THING
CRYSTAL QUEST!
WHATTA REVOLTIN' DEVELOPMENT!
I FINALLY GET A BREAK FROM FIGHTIN' SHAPESHIFTERS, WORLD-EATERS AND TWO-BIT MUSCLE MEN AND HOW DO I SPEND MY TIME OFF? I LET STRETCHO TALK ME INTO A LITTLE DAY TRIP INTO ONE O' THE MOST DANGEROUS PLACES THE FF HAS EVER BEEN TA LOOK FOR SOME SORTA POWER SOURCE!
AN' WITH MY LUCK IT'LL END UP BEING BLASTAAR'S BIG BROTHER. AN' ON TOP O' ALL THAT, THIS BLASTED ENERGY DETECTOR WHATSIS IS ON THE FRITZ! FIGGERS.
NEXT TIME, I'M GOIN' TO PISMO BEACH!

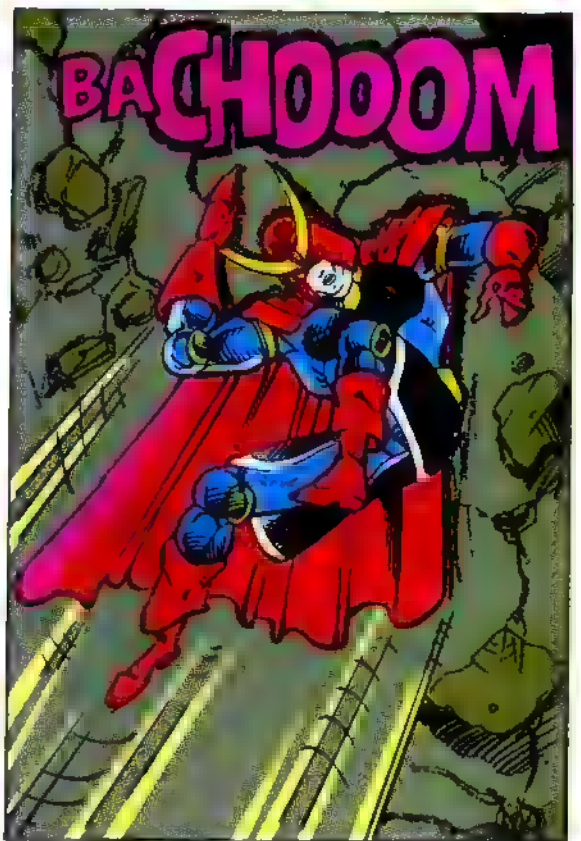

SHEESH, WILL YA GETTA LOADA THIS PLACE? I'VE SEEN PLANETS WITH MORE CHARM RIGHT AFTER GALACTUS HAS FINISHED HIS NOON-TIME FEEDIN'.
'BOUT TIME! THIS GIZMO'S FINALLY LOCKED ONTA SOMETHIN'!
BO-NG
WELL, WHADDAYA KNOW?
THAT LITTLE CRYSTAL UP THERE MUST BE WHAT REED SENT ME AFTER.
PLACE IS LONG-DESERTED... SO IT'S NOT LIKE I'M STEALIN' OR NOTHIN'!
THIS WAS EASIER THAN I THOUGHT! NO WONDER I'M THE IDOL O' MILLIONS!
THEN AGAIN... THE REST O' THIS PLACE IS ON THE SMALL SIDE O' SMITHEREENS, YET THIS THING IS SITTIN' UP HERE PRETTY AS YA PLEASE!
HOLD, WARRIOR, IF YOU SEEK TO OBTAIN THE CRYSTAL, YOU MUST FIRST PROVE YOURSELF WORTHY.'
AW, THERE'S ALWAYS A CATCH!
HEY! AN' WATCH WHERE YER POINTIN' THAT FANCY SWIZZLE STICK THERE, HANDSOME! SOMEBODY'S LIABLE TO GET--
ZZART
--HURT.

FWAKWAM
HEY, I KNOW YA PROBABLY DON'T GO AROUND BASHIN' IN ALL O' YER GUESTS LIKE THAT! YER MANNERS HAD BETTER IMPROVE BY THE TIME I GIT TO MY FEET.
DO YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE THE CRYSTAL OF VONTSALVANT WOULD BE LEFT UNATTENDED? THE CRYSTAL'S MIGHT HAS BEEN COVETED BY MANY OVER THE YEARS, BUT ONLY THOSE WHO PROVE THEMSELVES WORTHY MAY GAIN ACCESS TO ITS POWER...
THOOF
THWAK
THOK
...AND FOR MANY OF THOSE YEARS, IT IS I WHO HAVE BEEN THE VIGIL OF VONTSALVANT, AND ANY WHO SEEK OUT THE CRYSTAL MUST BE TESTED BY ME. RIGOROUSLY EXAMINED, ACTUALLY
BRUTISH AS YOU LOOK, I WOULD HAVE EXPECTED MORE OF A FIGHT OUT OF YOU.
A DISAPPOINTMENT, ACTUALLY.
VIRGIL, YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHIN' YET

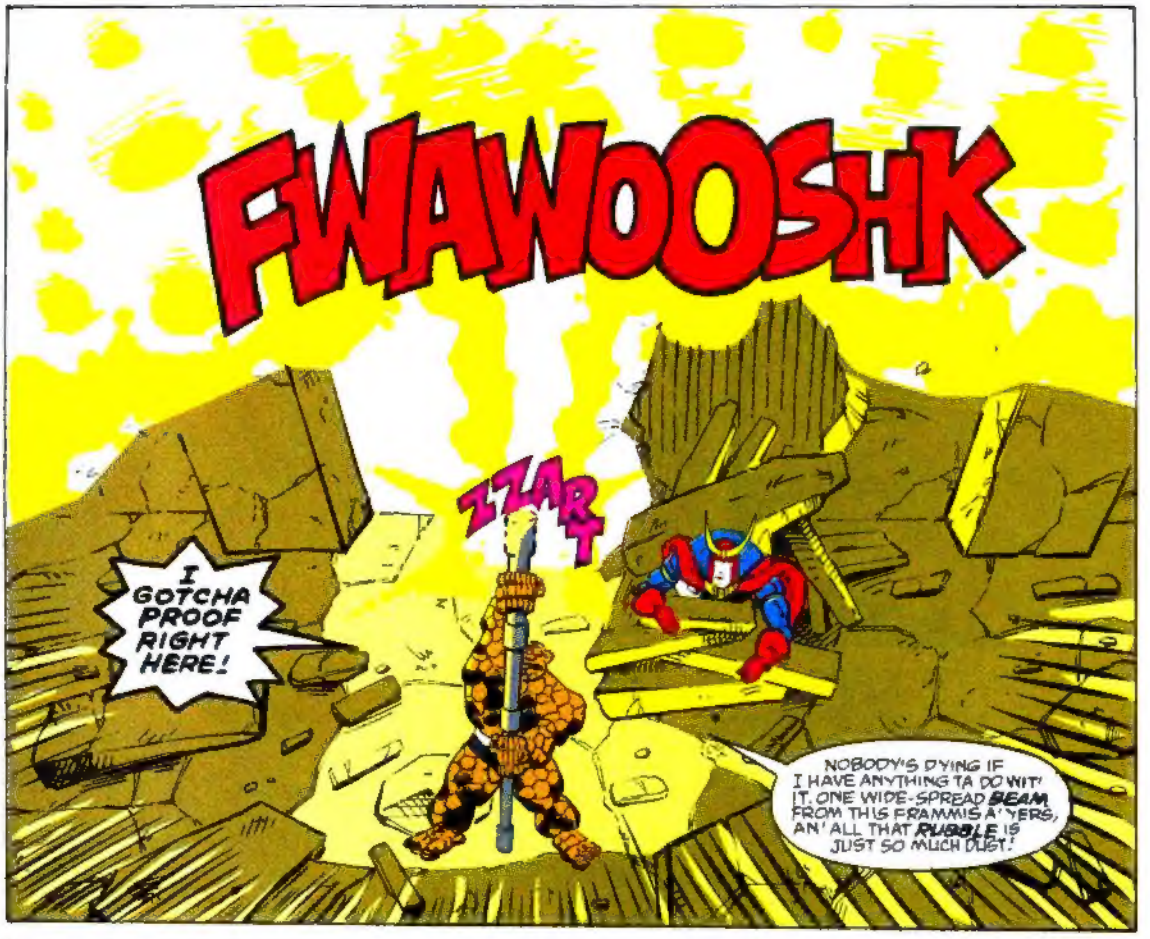

YOU JUST WAIT TILL I GET MY MITTS ON THAT KUTTY POGO STICK O' YERS!
ZZZARK
UNBELIEVABLE! YOU TAKE THE FULL FORCE OF MY BLAST! WHAT MANNER OF BEAST ARE YOU?

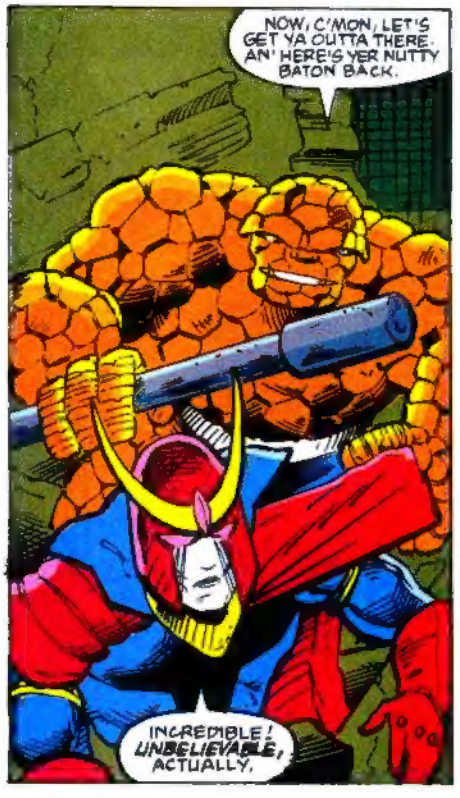

I'M THE EVER-LOVIN' BLUE-EYED THING, PAL, AN' I DON'T LET GUYS IN FANCY DUDS, HIDIN' BEHIND BIG STICKS PUSH ME AROUND.'
AN' ANOTHER THING, VIRGIL...


IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!
KARAK

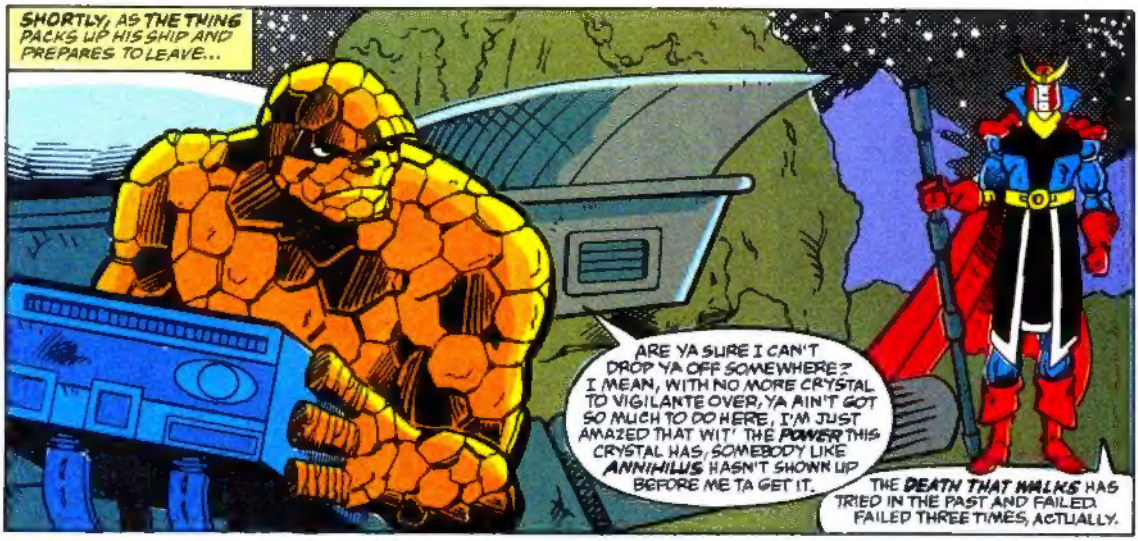

BA CHOOOM

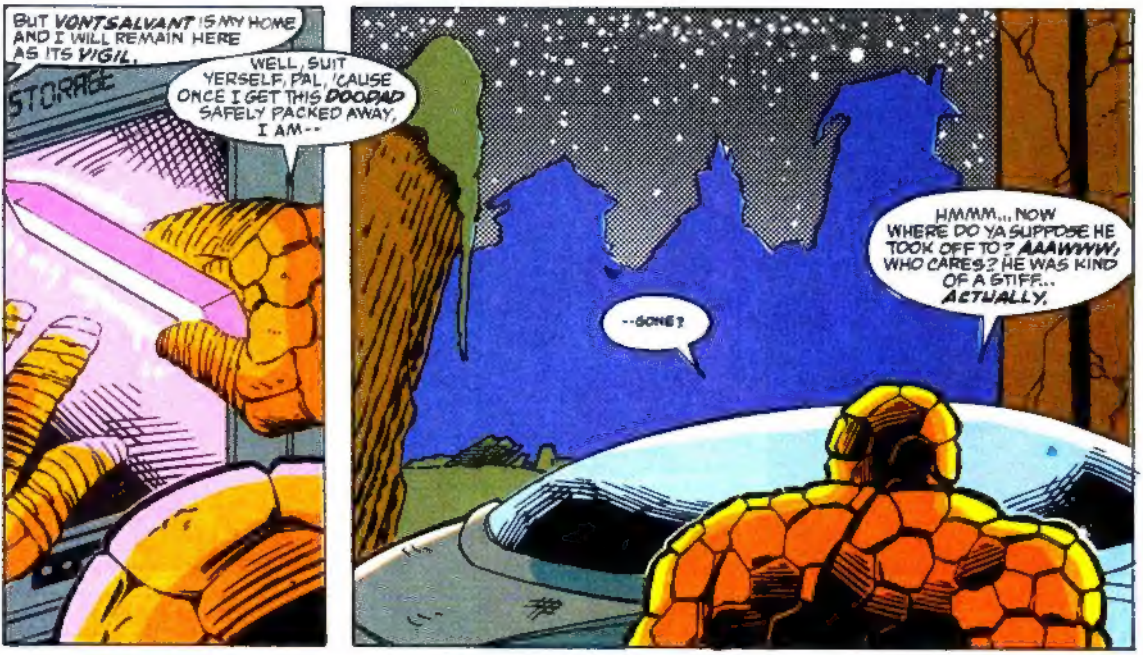
THAT OUGHTTA FIX YA, VIRGIL. IF YER THINKIN' OF TRYIN' ANY MORE FUNNY STUFF, DON'T!
YIGH, ACTUALLY,
SO THE TABLES HAVE TURNED. YOUR ENEMY IS DEFENSELESS!
AND IF YOU WILL HAVE ITS POWER, STILL YOU MUST PROVE YOURSELF.
BY KILLING ME.
HEY, PAL, YOU GOT IT ALL WRONG. I DON'T GO AROUND KILLIN' NOBODY...
THEN SURELY YOU CANNOT--EH?
RVRVRULUMBLL
THE TOWER! OUR STRUGGLE MUST HAVE WEAKENED IT!
QUICKLY WARRIOR! NOW IS THE TIME! PROVE YOUR-SELF!

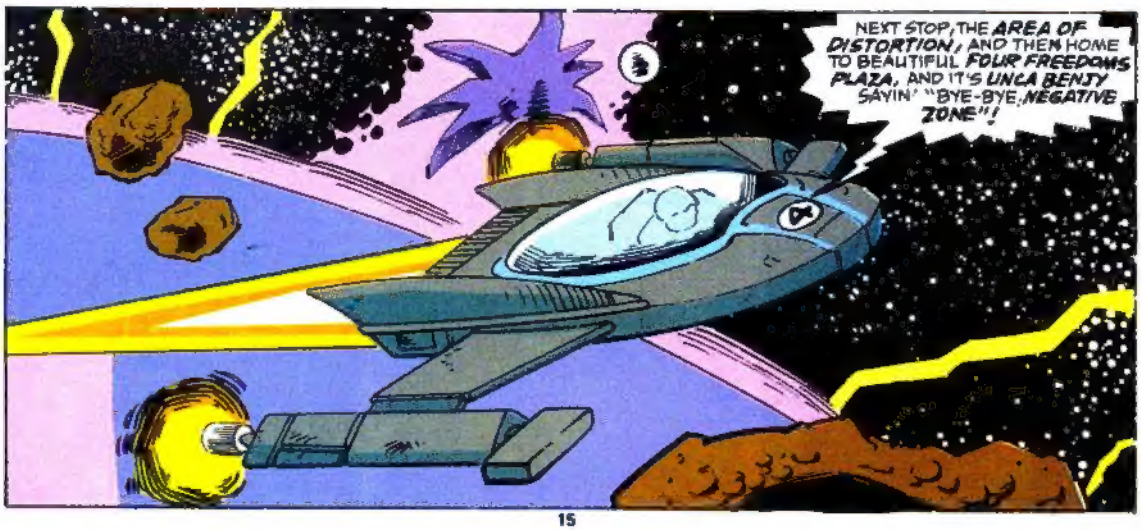

FWAWOOSHK
I GOTCHA PROOF RIGHT HERE!
ZZZAP!
NOBODY'S DYING IF I HAVE ANYTHING TA DO WIT' IT. ONE WIDE-SPREAD BEAM FROM THIS FRAMMIS A' YERS, AN' ALL THAT RUBBLE IS JUST SO MUCH DUST!

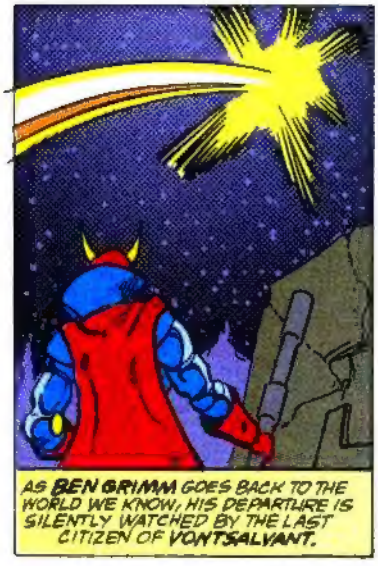

NOW, C'MON, LET'S GET YA OUTTA THERE. AN' HERE'S YER NUTTY BATON BACK.
INCREDIBLE! UNBELIEVABLE, ACTUALLY.

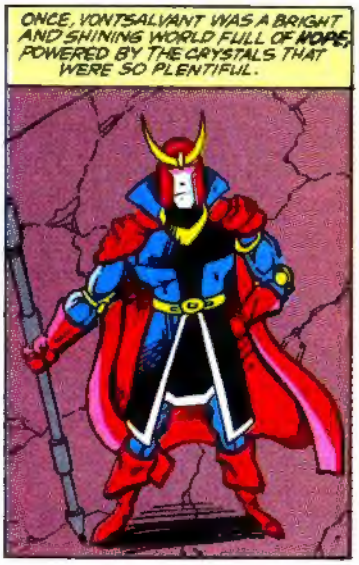
YOU COULD HAVE KILLED ME TO GET WHAT YOU WANTED, OR YOU COULD HAVE LET ME DIE... BUT YOU RISKED YOUR LIFE TO SAVE ME INSTEAD.
TRULY, YOU HAVE PROVED YOURSELF WORTHY. EXEMPLARY, ACTUALLY. THOSE WHO VIE FOR THE CRYSTAL OF VONT-SALVANT ARE TESTED NOT ON THE BASIS OF THEIR BRUTE STRENGTH, BUT ON THEIR CHARACTER.
THE CRYSTAL IS YOURS.
Y'KNOW, THIS IS A HECKUVA TIME TO BE TELLIN' ME THE RULES.


SHORTLY, AS THE THING PACKS UP HIS SHIP AND PREPARES TO LEAVE...
ARE YA SURE I CAN'T DROP YA OFF SOMEWHERE? I MEAN, WITH NO MORE CRYSTAL TO VIGILANTE OVER, YA AIN'T GOT SO MUCH TO DO HERE, I'M JUST AMAZED THAT WIT' THE POWER THIS CRYSTAL HAS, SOMEBODY LIKE ANNIHILUS HASN'T SHOWN UP BEFORE ME TA GET IT.
THE DEATH THAT WALKS HAS TRIED IN THE PAST AND FAILED. FAILED THREE TIMES, ACTUALLY.


BUT VONTSALVANT IS MY HOME AND I WILL REMAIN HERE AS ITS VIGIL.
STORAGE
WELL, SUIT YERSELF, PAL, 'CAUSE ONCE I GET THIS DOODAD SAFELY PACKED AWAY, I AM--
--GONE?
HMMM... NOW WHERE DO YA SUPPOSE HE TOOK OFF TO? AAAWWWW, WHO CARES? HE WAS KIND OF A STIFF... ACTUALLY.

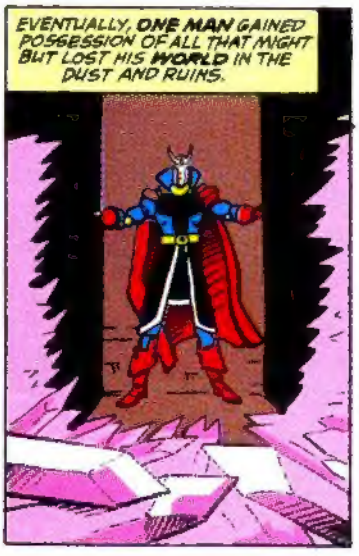

NEXT STOP, THE AREA OF DISTORTION, AND THEN HOME TO BEAUTIFUL FOUR FREEDOMS PLAZA, AND IT'S UNCA BENJY SAYIN' "BYE-BYE, NEGATIVE ZONE"!


AS BEN GRIMM GOES BACK TO THE WORLD WE KNOW, HIS DEPARTURE IS SILENTLY WATCHED BY THE LAST CITIZEN OF VONTSALVANT.

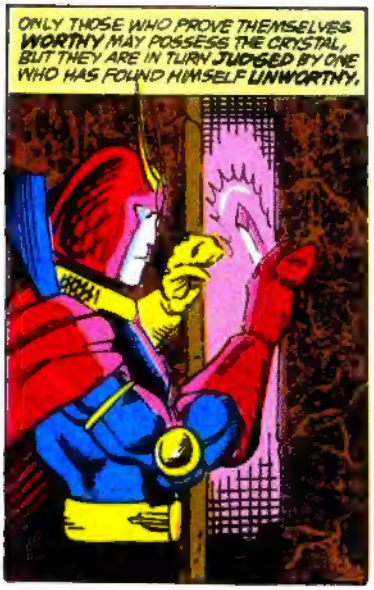

ONCE, VONTSALVANT WAS A BRIGHT AND SHINING WORLD FULL OF HOPE, POWERED BY THE CRYSTALS THAT WERE SO PLENTIFUL.

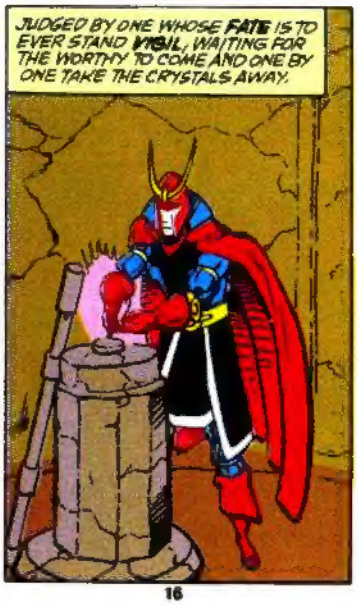
BUT THE ABUNDANT SUPPLY OF CRYSTALS GRADUALLY GREW SMALLER, AND THE PRICE AND COMPETITION FOR THEM GREW GREATER.

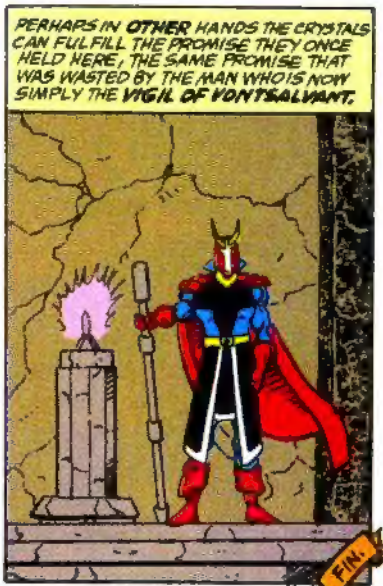
THE ENSUING CONFLICT FOR THE CRYSTALS ALL BUT DESTROYED THIS WORLD.


EVENTUALLY, ONE MAN GAINED POSSESSION OF ALL THAT MIGHT BUT LOST HIS WORLD IN THE DUST AND RUINS.

NOW HE REACHES INTO HIS STOCK-PILE OF LIFE-GIVING CRYSTALS, AND SELECTS ONE FOR THE NEXT WARRIOR WHO WILL COME HERE HOPING TO GAIN STRENGTH FROM IT.


ONLY THOSE WHO PROVE THEMSELVES WORTHY MAY POSSESS THE CRYSTAL, BUT THEY ARE IN TURN JUDGED BY ONE WHO HAS FOUND HIMSELF UNWORTHY.


JUDGED BY ONE WHOSE FATE IS TO EVER STAND VIGIL, WAITING FOR THE WORTHY TO COME AND ONE BY ONE TAKE THE CRYSTALS AWAY.


PERHAPS IN OTHER HANDS THE CRYSTALS CAN FULFILL THE PROMISE THEY ONCE HELD HERE, THE SAME PROMISE THAT WAS WASTED BY THE MAN WHO IS NOW SIMPLY THE VIGIL OF VONTSALVANT.
FIN.